

Spartans follow a work ethic and some great expectations

By Dan de Carbonel
STAFF WRITER

EMERYVILLE — The Spartans only have one thing on their minds as they enter the 1994 football season.

With key talent coming back at all the skill positions, Emery will not be satisfied with anything but a Bay Football Conference title.

Coached by Dennis Campbell, Emery fell short of the title last season with a 2-1 league record. This season, they promise, will be different.

The Spartans have installed a diversified offensive attack to emphasize their speed advantage at receiver and running back, but will only go as far as their offensive line will take them. Campbell is confident that the line will become one of their strengths.

"We're going to run the ball right down your throat," Campbell promised. "We're going to wear you down."

The Emery line is anchored by junior Travell Johnson. The 6-0, 240-pound right tackle attended the Cal football camp this summer and his coach has noticed the improvement.

"We are going to rely heavily on Travell this year. He had a real good camp, he's strong and he's a hard worker," Campbell said.

Johnson will be joined on the line by Gurplh Singh, a 6-2, 195-pound guard. Singh is a native of India and enters just his third season of American football. Campbell is counting on the senior to help shore up both the offensive and defensive lines.

Moving from the line to the fullback spot for the Spartans is Tim Rygg. He will be paired in the backfield with junior running back Jermond Johnson.

Rygg, a member of last year's NCS champion baseball team, hopes the Spartans can keep it going. The

Spartans goal for the season is to win section championships in football, basketball and baseball.

"I just want to do what I've never done in football. Win an NCS title," he said. "We know what it takes to win. We're confident."

Stepping into the quarterback spot will be junior Cory Gordon. When not handing off to Rygg or Johnson, Gordon will have a trio of talented receivers to choose from in juniors Anthony Denard and Alvin Stephenson and senior flanker Gary Kirven.

Booker Washington, a senior tight end, also returns.

Though concerned about their secondary, the Emery coaching staff is confident the defense will once again be strong.

"Our front seven should be real strong," said assistant coach Victor Pounci.

Campbell agrees.

"If we have a strong point that is it. We've got good defensive backs and good linebackers. If you have to get past our linebackers, you're not going to do it," Campbell said.

Washington, at 6-3, 190-pounds, will lead the defensive unit with Kirven at defensive back. The experienced pair will be counted on to cause havoc in opposing backfields. In addition, sophomore Eric Labou, a 6-5, 210-pound defensive end will lead the Spartan pass rush.

Campbell is comfortable with his team's expectations to win the conference. He too, won't be satisfied without the title.

"If they can live up to what the baseball team did last year in terms of handling adversity, then they can do it," he said.

Darnell Robinson's ghost haunts raw Emery squad

By Mark Saxon

STAFF WRITER

EMERYVILLE — Potential seems to be the key word in coach Denis Campbell's assessment of his Emery High boys basketball team this year.

But then again there's also a ghost haunting Emery's present — as in the specter of Arkansas Razorback star Darnell Robinson, who two years ago took the Spartans all the way to the state title.

This year the Spartans will face the rest of the Bay Counties League in Campbell's first season coaching the varsity team. He coached 13 years at the junior varsity level and worked as an East Bay basketball official.

The Spartans have lost four

senior starters from last year, including Jamaal Gaines, who now attends and plays baseball at Patten College.

But Campbell isn't giving up on this season. The Spartans, 3-4, have shown flashes of all-around good play in the preseason.

"These kids need to rise to the occasion," Campbell said. "Some of them are trying to do things they're not capable of — they're trying to be Magic Johnson. They're still learning to play within themselves."

Campbell said the Spartans like to run an up-tempo game, led by 5-9 guard Gary Kirven, who Campbell calls the team's "spark plug." Kirven can suddenly heat up and take control of the offensive game from beyond the three-point line. In

one game against Richmond High this year, Kirven hit five three-point goals in the third quarter alone.

When Emery needs dominant inside play, they can get the ball to their big man, 6-8 center George Jones, who weighs 285 pounds.

"If George can control the boards, we'll go a long way," Campbell said. "When we play a man-to-man defense, he comes out. He hopes to have perfected his play by the time league play comes around."

The Spartans' best all-around player may be 6-3 forward Alvin Stephenson, who can handle the ball and drive to the basket as well as shoot the jumper. Emery can also get solid production from Irah Griffin and Keith Ruffin.